



A report from the  
**Children's Trust Fund**



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Chairperson, Children's Trust Fund Council

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**Children's Trust Fund**  
An agency of the State of Connecticut

450 Capitol Avenue  
Hartford, CT 06106  
Tel 860.418.8765  
[www.ct.gov/ctf](http://www.ct.gov/ctf)

The Children's Trust Fund was created in 1983 for the sole purpose of preventing child abuse and neglect. The Trust Fund was established within the executive branch of the state government, with Council members appointed by the legislative leadership and four state commissioners.

In its more than 20 years, the Council has facilitated the Trust Fund's efforts in a variety of ways: by supporting collaborative partnerships with state agencies and community-based groups, by increasing public awareness of the depth and magnitude of child abuse, and by raising funds to support the prevention programs that reach into every corner of our state.

More than 80 organizations receive contracts from the Trust Fund; others receive small grants or scholarships. The Trust Fund also provides a significant amount of professional and program development.

We have a rigorous annual research and evaluation program conducted by the University of Hartford, which allows us to continually monitor the progress of the services we provide and validate the outcomes.

I am pleased and proud to say that the Council has contributed in a meaningful way to the important work of the Trust Fund. In the future, the Council will continue to be active in pushing, prodding, and informing the state and federal legislatures of our successes and ongoing funding needs. We will continue to maintain research and evaluation data to present accurate information to staff and the Council. And finally we will seize creative opportunities to get our message of prevention of child abuse and neglect out to the general public.

As many of us have said in many ways, a hundred years from now, it will not matter what our bank account balance was or the kind of clothes we wore, but the world may be much different because we were important to the life of a child.

To be important to the life of a child is truly the ultimate goal of the Children's Trust Fund Council.

Sincerely,

Flo Woodiel  
Chairperson, Children's Trust Fund Council



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I am glad to have the opportunity to present to you the work of the Children's Trust Fund.

Each year, approximately 30,000 cases of child maltreatment are reported in Connecticut, and an additional 10,000 children are born into families with at least one significant risk factor for abuse or neglect. Recognizing the extent of the problem, the Connecticut General Assembly established the Children's Trust Fund in 1997 as a separate and independent state agency with the sole purpose of preventing child abuse and neglect.

Between 1997 and 2005, the Trust Fund coordinated, developed, or funded more than 200 programs and initiatives statewide designed to engage families before a crisis occurs — to actually keep abuse and neglect from happening.

We act in many areas: providing direct service, funding programs, raising public awareness of the issues, working on systems change, conducting research and evaluation, and training volunteers and others. We are continuously developing new programs and resources, and we are always willing to try out new ideas to serve our families.

Our work would not have been possible without the support and funding of both the federal and state governments, state agencies, private foundations, and individuals. A list of recent contributors may be found at the back of this report. We are also grateful to the many community-based programs, organizations, entities, service providers, and volunteers who have been working with us. Together, we are building momentum in a coordinated effort to support and nurture Connecticut's families.

This report describes our programs and services and outlines our work. My staff and I would be pleased to answer any questions or provide further information about our mission and our progress in preventing child abuse and neglect.

Sincerely,

Karen Foley Schain  
Executive Director, Children's Trust Fund



# who we are

In 1997, the Children's Trust Fund became an independent state agency in the Executive Branch, responsible to the General Assembly with the mission of preventing child abuse and neglect and establishing resources in communities statewide that support and strengthen families and ensure the positive growth and development of children.

The Connecticut General Assembly initially created the Trust Fund in 1983 as an advisory council to the Commissioner of the Department of Children and Families. Over the years, both the Council and the Commissioner came to recognize that, in order to advance work in the field of prevention, the Council needed to include other state agencies and additional partners. This recognition led to the 1997 legislation, which broadened the mission of the Trust Fund.

We work with state agencies, hospitals, clinics, schools, and community service organizations to recognize the potential for child abuse, work with families at risk, initiate programs that support these families, and build safe communities for children.

## **Our overall goals are to:**

- Increase broad-based prevention efforts in communities
- Create a continuum of services to meet the needs of all families



- Create a network of agencies that can work together, support one another, and advance the prevention agenda
- Increase public awareness and invite all to participate in prevention efforts

Our work is guided by the ideas that there are strengths in all families and that all cultures, individuals, families, and community agencies have much to contribute. We value teamwork and recognize the critical importance of interdependence and collaboration at local, state, and federal levels in meeting our goals.

**who we help** We provide parents and families with the resources they need to cope with the stresses in their lives and with their children—without resorting to abuse and neglect. Our programs provide comprehensive support and direct service to groups of parents identified as at risk, particularly those with a history of domestic violence, substance abuse, and mental health issues; and those dealing with children with special needs and disabilities. Our programs are voluntary and usually occur in settings where our families are.

Research has shown that the effects of abuse and neglect are often devastating to a child. Not only can maltreatment cause impairment in brain development, serious injury or psychological problems, but it also can contribute to high dropout rates, involvement in crime, and poverty. Children



with a history of abuse or neglect often end up on the caseloads of the Departments of Mental Health and Substance Abuse, Corrections, and Social Services as adults.

Research identifies poverty as a critical factor that puts children at greater risk for developmental and behavioral problems, health issues, learning disabilities, and cognitive delays. Our efforts, therefore, have centered on finding the most effective ways of assisting families living in poverty, so they have a chance for a better future for themselves and their children.



**the children's trust fund council** The work of the Children's Trust Fund is directed by a 16-member interdisciplinary board consisting of the Commissioners of the Department of Children and Families, Public Health, Social Services, and Education; and twelve others appointed by the House and Senate majority and minority leaders representing business, the child abuse prevention field, parents, and pediatricians.

The Council has thus come to truly represent a broad-based public-private partnership committed to the prevention of child abuse and neglect and to the well-being of children. The collaboration fostered by the members of the Council has strengthened our efforts and is crucial to the development of our programs and initiatives.

**The Council advances the work of the Trust Fund by:**

- Providing broad-based counsel and general oversight
- Reviewing, revising, and approving specific policies and programs, including budgets, allocation of funds, and awarding of contracts
- Drawing on the varied points of view of individual Council members regarding any opportunities and circumstances that might impact the Trust Fund
- Assuring that the Trust Fund remains focused on its vision and long-term strategies
- Getting involved with local agencies and organizations, service providers, and consumers



- Fundraising and developing strategies that will expand funding sources to include corporations, civic groups, and private foundations
- Reporting to the General Assembly and Governor on the status of the Trust Fund and its programs
- Developing legislative efforts to increase the knowledge of prevention programs that support families
- Promoting and participating in activities that raise awareness of the issues surrounding child abuse and neglect

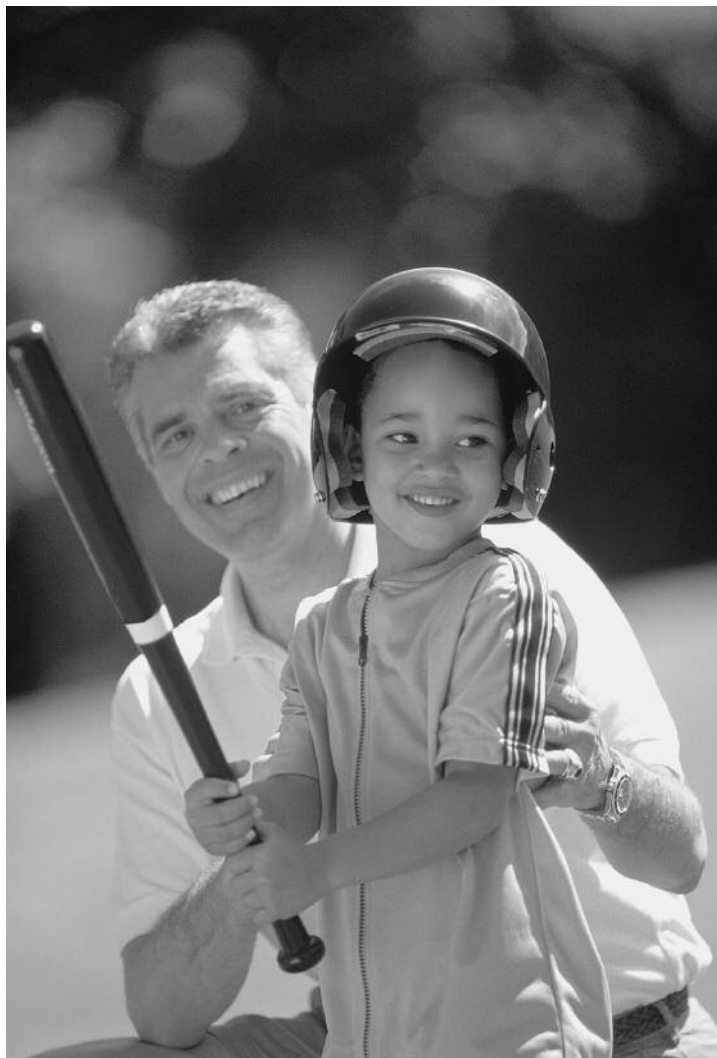
Overall, the Council is the center of the passion surrounding the urgent need to prevent child abuse and neglect. The Council members are champions for the cause that drives the prevention efforts of the Trust Fund.

**the national alliance** The Children's Trust Fund was initially formed as part of a national movement to establish such funds in all 50 states. Many state Trust Funds are now part of a National Alliance of Children's Trust and Prevention Funds.

The National Alliance promotes a system of services, laws, practices, and attitudes that supports families by enabling them to provide their children with a safe, healthy, and nurtured childhood. Its long-term plans and activities include advocating for increased public and private funding for community-based child abuse and neglect prevention activities, supporting and strengthening the state Trust Funds, promoting awareness of the importance of strength-

ening families, and collaborating with other national child abuse prevention organizations.

Members of the National Alliance are catalysts for the development of community-based child abuse and neglect prevention programs in their states. They are also incubators for innovative prevention programs and services. The state Trust Funds are able to look at what has worked nationally, review national research, and use these ideas to build and strengthen their own programs.



## how we work

The work of the Children's Trust Fund focuses on the following areas:

- Raising funds and directly funding prevention programs
- Encouraging existing agencies to incorporate a prevention component or focus into their ongoing work
- Creating a knowledgeable work force that is well trained in prevention strategies and approaches
- Initiating activities that improve the various systems that impact families
- Conducting research that leads to more effective programs

Our most important work is in funding the programs that directly provide services to high-risk parents. Many of our major programs have gained a degree of national recognition and are supported by research and evaluation. Since 1997, our programs have been addressing domestic violence and substance abuse, mental health issues, and the needs of parents of children with special needs and disabilities. Our most recent initiatives broaden our range of services to include the families of very young truant, children in socially isolated family day care settings, shaken baby syndrome, child sexual abuse, grandparent respite care, and Makayla's House, a group home for teenage girls at risk.

Our programs operate in both long-term and short-term time frames. Our program on shaken baby syndrome

and our program giving mini-grants to families to address immediate needs are examples of short-term actions. Other programs, such as our Nurturing Families Network, provide support to families over a longer period, dealing with various issues as they arise. The different time frames allow us to develop a range of ways to address problems and meet the specific needs of our families.

We have created an organization and systems to support the work of our internal staff, our contracted service providers, and our funders and partners. We provide training, coordination, resources, information, and direction. We help our community-based partner organizations with managerial issues, if needed.

Our goals call for us to raise the visibility of the issues surrounding child abuse and neglect and to act as advocates for families. We have been developing events and activities to educate and raise awareness about these issues. We will continue to be part of a national movement, providing credible, compelling, and positive support and initiatives that will help us meet our overall mission.

**issues** Research and activities in the area of child abuse and neglect regularly identify new issues, themes, and approaches that can help us in our work. The two most important issues we are working on now are differential response and corporal punishment.

**Differential Response** Providers of child protective services have noticed the value of involving the community in child

protection and in supporting children and families. A new policy, called the 'differential response,' has been proposed that would offer community-based services to at-risk families, rather than conducting an extensive investigation of an incident.

For example, a health care provider might think that something is wrong with a new mother and her infant and refer the matter to the Department of Children and Families. An investigation may not uncover abuse or neglect, so the case is closed. The mother may or may not receive a referral to other services, and will likely not have further contact with DCF. The mother is on her own, and may not receive the help she needs.

A differential response might refer the mother to a community-based organization that works with families that come to the attention of the DCF, but do not require the traditional investigative response. The organization will be in a position to work with the mother, help connect her to community resources, and help her receive the services and support she needs.

Differential response policies have been adopted in 26 states and have been shown to make children safer sooner, deliver needed services faster, and increase the use of community resources by at-risk families.

**Corporal Punishment** Another important issue is that of corporal punishment. Research has repeatedly shown that corporal punishment as a means of discipline is of limited effectiveness and has potentially deleterious effects.

The Trust Fund recommends that parents be encouraged and assisted in the development of methods other than spanking for managing undesirable behavior. We suggest that our



service providers work with families on developing a comprehensive approach that includes consideration of the parent-child relationship, reinforcement of desired behaviors, and consequences for negative behaviors.

In April 2005, the Trust Fund sponsored a State Forum in Hartford on the issue of corporal punishment, its impact on children, and the effects of legal opinions and public policy on prevention efforts. The topics covered included current law, perspectives on the limited effectiveness of corporal punishment, and ways to help families make healthy discipline choices.

Subsequently, the Trust Fund sponsored four community forums in New Haven, Bridgeport, Hartford, and Middletown for family service providers. The presenters reviewed the key points from the State Forum and asked the providers to share their thoughts and opinions on working with parents on the issue of corporal punishment. The attendees then broke up into small groups to discuss how the Trust Fund could help them further with this issue.

**research** Research is an important component of the Trust Fund's activities. It is essential for all of our major programs to be rigorously evaluated and studied. The evaluation provides us with critical information about program performance and allows us to better understand and assess the impact of various interventions.

We also conduct research to better understand and assess areas of risk for child abuse and neglect, the



effectiveness of various prevention service models, and strategies for improving the skills of our service providers.

***Studying and Evaluating our Programs*** Our major programs and all organizations receiving funds from the Trust Fund undergo a rigorous evaluation process to assess the effectiveness and quality of the services offered, review recordkeeping, and identify areas for improvement. We allocate more than \$400,000 in our budget for this research.

We use a variety of tools to study our programs. For example, we asked a number of certified trainers, students, and field

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Our research has supported the belief that home visiting services and early childhood education efforts should go hand-in-hand and that home visiting should become an integral component of the state's early childhood education strategy.



advisors to review current training efforts and to create strategies for enhancement.

Our Study Circles Project brought together 100 personnel from 16 program sites to review the Nurturing Families Network Home Visiting program policies and to consider recommendations for program enhancement. This project led to the development of our Continuous Quality Improvement Committee, which reviews research and recommendations and converts the findings into practice enhancements, program revisions, and new program development. The Committee is composed of staff at all levels, representing a range of professional knowledge and field experience and presenting numerous points of view. By drawing on the talents and expertise of many people involved in different aspects of our work, the committee helps us build stronger programs, a stronger organization, stronger relationships with our partners, and more momentum for our advocacy activities.

Many of our program evaluation studies are conducted by the University of Hartford's Center for Social Research. Overall, these studies show that programs supported by the Trust Fund are meeting their goals. They are successfully providing support and assistance to high-risk families, reducing the incidence and severity of child abuse and neglect, and helping parents to become better, more responsible caregivers.

**Studying What Works** By studying what works, we are able to develop materials and curricula for our service providers based on tested and proven models. We are able to draw on the experiences of other organizations in trying

new programs and evaluating ideas. Our research also helps us better understand and assess our at-risk families, learn more about the issues they face, and learn how to meet their needs more effectively. We are able to provide our program staff with training in the skills and knowledge they need to engage in prevention activities and work with vulnerable families.

We have supported needs assessment studies in which community-based networks across the state have met to identify gaps in community services and to share ways to fill the gaps. The solutions may involve strengthening existing programs or creating strategies to bring needed services to their communities.

Several studies have shown us how to combine programs to increase effectiveness. For example, our research has supported the belief that home visiting services and early childhood education efforts should go hand-in-hand and that home visiting should become an integral component of the state's early childhood education strategy.

The University of Hartford's Center for Social Research has conducted a number of studies for us in relation to the Nurturing Families Network program. The two most important studies are *Life Stories of Vulnerable Families in Connecticut*, which sets out the histories of 250 families that are participating in the program, and an ethnography study. These studies are described in the discussion of the program.

**programs and services** The Children's Trust Fund provides funding and support for many community-based programs, and it develops and manages its own programs, all related to preventing child abuse and neglect and to supporting families. The programs we support meet the following guidelines:

- The programs are built around the ideas that prevention is better than treatment, earlier is better than later.
- The programs are part of a continuum of services that aim to reach all families.
- The programs address the known risk factors, including substance abuse, mental illness, domestic violence, poverty, and social isolation.
- The agencies selected to house programs must demonstrate a significant commitment to the program and have access to the population at risk.
- The programs must be willing to collaborate as part of a network of programs and agencies funded by the Trust Fund and other sources.

The following descriptions of our major programs cover the issues they address, the populations they serve, and operations.

***Nurturing Families Network*** The Nurturing Families Network is the main program supported by the Trust Fund. Its mission is to work in partnership with first-time parents facing the challenges of parenthood by enhancing their strengths, providing education, and creating community connections.

Each year, 10,000 children in Connecticut are born into families with at least one significant risk factor for abuse or neglect, with approximately 3,500 of these as first-time births. Most of the programs in the state have been designed to intervene after abuse has occurred. The Nurturing Families Network is unique, however, in that it focuses on high-risk parents and starts working with them at or before the birth. The program is offered to parents at 25 of the 29 birthing hospitals in the state, and funding is in place to expand the program to all 29 birthing hospitals. Almost 97% of the families offered the program voluntarily accept its services.

**The program has been built around the ideas that:**

- A trusting and productive relationship between program staff and the family is the foundation for strengthening vulnerable families.
- Consistent and expected contacts are the most effective way to establish a supportive and helpful relationship between program staff and the family.

The Trust Fund provides funding for 35 Nurturing Families Network Programs throughout the state, including programs in Manchester, Hartford, New London, New Haven, Danbury, Derby, Waterbury, Bridgeport, Willimantic, Torrington, Sharon, Norwich, Middletown, Stamford, Meriden, New Britain, Norwalk, Bristol, and Greenwich.

**The program is composed of three primary components:** Nurturing Connections, Nurturing Parenting Groups, and Intensive Home Visiting.



***Nurturing Connections*** Nurturing Connections links new parents to volunteers and other resources that can help them adjust to the many demands of parenthood. The families are provided with critical information while the mother and baby are still in the hospital. The information covers baby health care, the physical needs and capabilities of infants and children as they grow, the dangers of shaking a baby, and accident prevention.

***Nurturing Parenting Groups*** Nurturing Parenting Groups help families develop skills, attitudes, and behaviors to become better parents. The Groups are designed to address four patterns of behavior that are often found in abusive households: inappropriate developmental expectations, lack of empathy, strong belief in corporal punishment, and reversing parent/child roles. The information, support, and interaction provided by the Groups have been shown to moderate these patterns and reduce the risk of abuse and neglect. Approximately 5,000 new parents each year receive education and support under these first two components.

***Intensive Home Visiting*** The Intensive Home Visiting services are offered to new parents who are most at risk of abusing or neglecting their child. This component provides home visitors, who visit the homes weekly for up to five years. The visitors become teachers, supporters, and advocates for the families and help the families get the community services they need. In 2005, approximately 1,200 families received the visiting services.



The Trust Fund expects to reach 300 more families in each subsequent year as a result of a major expansion of the program in the city of Hartford. The Hartford Foundation, the Mayor of the City of Hartford, the two city-based hospitals, and several community agencies are integral to the Trust Fund's efforts to expand the program.

***Research on the Nurturing Families Network Program*** The University of Hartford's Center for Social Research has vigorously researched the impact of the Nurturing Families Network program, and the results have been consistently strong.

**Studies of the Intensive Home Visiting component have shown the following results:**

- The immunization rate for 2-year-olds in homes receiving visits is 93%, compared to 73% for 2-year-olds with similar

demographic backgrounds on Medicaid.

- A significant percentage of the parents are completing high school, becoming employed, and moving out of financial hardship.
- The percentage of mothers establishing independent households increased from 53% to 93% in the second year of program involvement. This is a significant finding; given the high number of mothers who were living in abusive or violent or potentially violent households at the start of their program involvement, the children will likely be safer and at lower risk of abuse.
- The families demonstrated an improvement in parent-child relationships and in parenting capacity, attitudes, and behavior.

**Studies of the Nurturing Families Network Program as a whole have found the following additional benefits:**

- Families who have been in the program for at least two years are significantly less dependent on the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program. Their employment rates and income levels rise.
- The longer parents are in the program, the greater the decrease in the likelihood they will abuse their child.
- While the program cannot remove the structural causes of poverty, the services provided can ameliorate the harshest effects of poverty by building self-esteem, improving parent-child bonding and interaction, helping families find needed social services, and reducing social isolation.

- While no one component can solve all the problems a family faces, well-organized coordination of the components, along with other resources, can make a significant difference.
- The program increases the quality of family relationships and thus reduces the incidence of child abuse.

Two of the studies conducted by the Center for Social Research have provided significant information about the Nurturing Families Network components that has helped us increase the effectiveness of the program.

The *Life Stories of Vulnerable Families in Connecticut* study looked at 250 families that have participated in the program. Through a series of interviews, researchers uncovered the issues facing the families, as well as the role of home visitors in helping them raise a healthy child. The study has given us a better understanding of the families served by the program. We have created a task force to examine the findings of this study and make recommendations for program improvement.

An ethnography study of the Nurturing Families Network had ethnographers following family service workers and observing them in the everyday context of their work. The ethnographers also talked with the families receiving services, the service workers, and the program supervisors. The study provided a significant amount of information about relationships in the program—between the families and their family service workers and between the family

service workers and their program supervisors—which is helping us provide better services to the families, better training for the service workers, and better management for the program.

**Family Empowerment Programs** Many programs for families address only specific issues, such as domestic violence, substance abuse, mental health issues, the needs of children with disabilities, extreme poverty, or social isolation. The programs do not extend to other matters that affect the well-being of a child, such as parenting and family relationships. If these additional matters are not addressed, a child may still be at risk.

A number of communities are developing their own programs to help families address the whole range of issues they face—including parenting and family relationships—by filling the gaps between the specific programs and services. The Trust Fund is currently providing funds for eight of these community-based programs:

- MELD for Growing Families, run by Family Services of Greater Waterbury
- Mom's Program, at the New Britain General Hospital
- Real Men Make Better Dads, run by Madonna Place in Norwich
- Focus on Fathers, run by the Wheeler Clinic in Somers at Osborn Prison
- Mothershare, run by Hartford Interval House
- Parenting Academy and ABCD, run by the Child Guidance Center of Greater Bridgeport







- Friendship Circle, at the Rushford Center in Middletown
- Family School Connection, at the Betances School in Hartford

Approximately 1,000 high-risk families have been helped so far by these Family Empowerment Programs.

**Help Me Grow** Help Me Grow is a prevention program designed to identify children at risk for developmental or behavioral problems and to connect these children to existing community resources. Since 2002, we have reached over 7,000 children who are at risk, but do not qualify for the state's Birth-to-Three services.

The program was developed to meet the following guiding assumptions:

- Children with developmental or behavioral problems may be falling through cracks or eluding early detection.
- The challenge is in forming the connections to programs and services.
- Children and families benefit from a coordinated, statewide system of early detection and intervention for children at risk.

**The program has four main components:**

1. Training child health providers in effective developmental surveillance
2. Creating a resource inventory of community-based programs supporting child development and families

3. Developing a coordinated, statewide system of referral that links young children and families to existing services and support
4. Collecting data and analyzing children's developmental status

Our program staff has trained health care providers in 153 pediatric and family practices in the techniques of "developmental surveillance"—a flexible, continuous process in which knowledgeable professionals perform skilled observations of children while providing routine care. These observations, combined with input from parents, may uncover behavioral, emotional, and other developmental difficulties that could threaten a child's future and well being if not treated.

A study on the effectiveness of the health care training was conducted by the Connecticut Children's Medical Center, with grant funding from the Commonwealth Foundation. The research found that health care providers identified twice as many children at risk for developmental delays following the training. The results of the study may be found in a February 2006 supplement of the *Journal of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics*.

Health care providers and parents are encouraged to call the Child Development Infoline with any concerns about a child's development or behavior. The staff will then use creative and resourceful techniques to find the best services to meet the needs of the family, including community



The Grandparent's Respite Fund provides grants of up to \$2,000 per family to provide for respite care, when a grandparent is serving as a child's guardian.

resources, family outreach and follow-up, family education programs, and the Ages & Stages Developmental Monitoring Program in which more than 2,000 families have participated.

The Child Development Infoline (a 1-800-number) is administered by the United Way of Connecticut/Infoline, with funding from the Trust Fund and the state Departments of Mental Retardation, Education, and Public Health.

***The Kinship Fund and Grandparent's Respite Fund*** The Kinship Fund provides small grants to 2,400 children annually who have been orphaned or abandoned and are living in the care of a grandparent or financially struggling relative who has been appointed guardian. The grants (\$50–\$500 per child, or \$1,000 per family) provide funds for a variety of purposes, such as new clothes, a bed and desk, eyeglasses, or tutoring and after-school programs. The grants, which are administered by 10 probate courts, help make life normal for children facing a difficult adjustment to new circumstances.

The Grandparent's Respite Fund provides grants of up to \$2,000 per family to provide for respite care, when a grandparent is serving as a child's guardian. The grant helps provide relief for the grandparent, and may be requested annually, as long as the grandparent continues to serve as guardian. This program is also administered by the probate courts.

The Trust Fund also funds other initiatives for grandparents and other relatives raising children, such as support groups and parenting programs that help with such issues as discipline and relating to children, assistance with basic needs, and information about how to deal with the various systems they encounter—from the Department of Social Services to the schools to the courts.

***Makayla's House*** Makayla was the first teenager in Connecticut to die from taking Ecstasy, at age 16, after struggling with many issues. In her memory, the Trust Fund is establishing Makayla's House, a group home and safe

harbor for six girls between the ages of thirteen and sixteen, who are struggling with family problems, have run away, or are having serious problems at school. The mission of Makayla's House is to provide a safe and nurturing environment for these girls, as they build life skills and work with their families to resolve their problems.

Girls may be referred to Makayla's House by the police, their schools, or their parents. In the short-term, Makayla's House will provide a cooling-off period, while keeping the girls safe and off the streets. The longer-term goal is to help each girl reestablish communication with her family and work toward reunification. If this is not possible, the staff at Makayla's House will work to create a different positive option for the girl.

Makayla's House will be located in northern Middlesex County and will be open seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day to girls who need help and who might not be able to find needed help and services through other programs.

***Parent Trust Fund*** The Parent Trust Fund was established in 2002, due to the efforts of the Connecticut Commission on Children and other advocates, to offer leadership training and grants to support the involvement of parents in their communities and to fund programs that train parents in civic leadership skills. The Parent Trust Fund is directed through a collaborative partnership in which the Children's Trust Fund administers the program and the Commission on Children provides technical assistance and quality control oversight. The Parent Trust Fund receives federal or private money from grants and gifts.

The Parent Trust Fund has supported a range of programs, including the Parent Leadership Training Institute and the University of Connecticut-sponsored People Empowering People. The program has also provided money to 29 communities in the state for programs and activities that increase the involvement of parents and grandparents in civic activity, help improve learning and achievement outcomes for children, and bolster health and safety in the community.

Research evaluating the program has shown that the increased parent involvement has had a positive effect on children's learning, development, school attendance and achievement, and attitudes about school. The parents themselves have become aware of their own abilities. Many have changed jobs, gotten more schooling, and developed higher expectations of their children and of the school system.

**Volunteer Services** The Trust Fund depends on the work of many volunteers to staff and run programs. The Governor's Prevention Partnership will be key in helping the Trust Fund find volunteers by developing relationships between community-based programs and local corporations. The Partnership will hire a staff person, who will serve as a broker working with corporate contacts to identify, recruit, and train volunteers to work in the programs. The staff person will perform the work needed—from solving problems to developing policies—until the relationship between the corporation and the program has become established.

The work of the Partnership has helped strengthen communities as a whole, with local businesses becoming involved in the most critical needs of the local residents and community-based programs finding a supply of service providers and other resources.

**CAPTA Programs** The federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) was created in 1974 to provide a focal point in the federal government to identify and address child abuse and neglect issues and to support effective prevention initiatives. CAPTA changed the country's child protection system, because the receipt of CAPTA funds depends on a state enacting mandatory child abuse reporting laws and setting up procedures to investigate child abuse and neglect. As a result of CAPTA, all states now have the mandatory reporting laws and investigative procedures.

The Trust Fund has been named Connecticut's lead agency for the CAPTA Title II program (Community-Based Grants for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect), which provides grants that support community-based efforts to develop, operate, expand, and enhance initiatives to prevent child abuse and neglect. Several of the programs for which the Trust Fund has gotten CAPTA funding are described below.



**Connecticut Family Development Institute** The Institute, a joint initiative of the Trust Fund and the University of Connecticut's School of Family Studies, teaches service providers the skills needed to help individuals and families attain both healthy self-reliance and interdependence with their communities. A key component in this training is a curriculum developed by Cornell University, which is strength-based and family-focused, and covers home visiting, collaboration, communications, cultural competence, and community outreach.

The Institute offers two programs. The first is an 80-hour community-based program that gives comprehensive skill-building training to people who work with families. Participants who complete this training, prepare a skills-based portfolio, and pass the competency-based examination are eligible for an FDC credential from the School of Family Studies. More than 3,200 participants have completed this program. The second is a 35-hour certified training for leaders to learn practical ways to build their organizational capacity in areas of interagency collaboration, strength-based assessment, multicultural competence, and professional development.

These programs provide many benefits. They have been shown to build lasting links to networks and resources within the community; establish a cohesive workforce that values families and the community as resources; allow participants to demonstrate how theory translates into practice; and establish mentor relationships that help participants do a better job and develop their careers.





***Shaken Baby Syndrome Prevention Project*** This project, a joint initiative of the Trust Fund and the Connecticut Children's Medical Center, addresses the problem of shaken baby syndrome—the violent shaking of infants and young children, which can cause brain damage, fractures, and death. National research indicates that 50,000 children each year are affected by shaken baby syndrome, and 15% of children's deaths are caused by it.

The project is based on the work of Dr. Mark Dias, a pediatric neurosurgeon, who suggested that the incidence of shaken baby syndrome could be reduced by reminding parents of the danger of shaking a baby right after birth, when they are holding their baby for the first time.

**The program has four steps:**

1. Shortly after a child is born, the parents watch a video on the dangers of shaking their baby.
2. A hospital staff member discusses the video and the risks of shaking their baby with the new parents and encourages the parents to share the information with everyone who will care for the child—including boyfriends and babysitters.
3. New parents are asked to sign an affidavit stating that they understand the dangers of shaking their baby and agreeing to not shake their child. They also agree to inform all others who will care for their child of the risks of shaking a baby.
4. Program coordinators follow-up with the new parents to reinforce the message and to see how they are doing.



Research on the effectiveness of this approach has shown that there is a 57% reduction in the incidence of shaken baby syndrome in families who have gone through the program.

Through the efforts of the Trust Fund, information based on the Dias model is being distributed, and the ideas are beginning to take hold. More than 60 agencies in the state have committed to learning how they can prevent shaken baby syndrome.

***Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Project*** Of the nearly 900,000 substantiated cases of child abuse nationwide in 2000, approximately 10% fall into the category of sexual abuse. In Connecticut, 14% of residents reported having experienced childhood sexual assault, and 18% of the women have reported experiencing sexual assault as a child.

Research has shown that, aside from the physical and emotional trauma, a child sexual abuse victim suffers many long-term effects, including depression, anxiety, inappropriate sexual behavior, poor self-esteem, and difficulty with close relationships. Early identification of sexual abuse appears crucial to reducing the suffering and to establishing the support systems that lead to appropriate psychological development and healthier adult functioning.

The Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Project is changing the focus of efforts to address this issue. Current efforts typically have put the burden of dealing with child sexual abuse on children by educating young children on the dangers of, for example, talking with strangers or letting adults touch them

inappropriately. The Project is now looking at ways to put the burden back on adults.

Under this project, a multidisciplinary, interagency committee representing more than 25 statewide agencies and programs collected available information about child sexual abuse in Connecticut, identified offense patterns, and used study circles to identify and prioritize feasible opportunities for prevention programs that involve adults. The committee produced a first-of-its-kind study of the latest available data on both victims and perpetrators, and has held two statewide forums. More than 200 participants from the child welfare, judicial, and health and human services fields attended.

As an outcome of this work, the Trust Fund has awarded a \$100,000 grant to East Hartford ChildPlan, Inc., for the development and implementation of a community-based strategy that charges the adults within the community with the prevention of child abuse. People in the community are being informed about the nature of childhood sexual abuse, and are being taught how to recognize a sexual offender, how sexual offenders operate, and how to keep their children safe.





## into the future

Since 1997, the Trust Fund has made significant progress. It has been working with hundreds of other organizations on prevention initiatives and has done significant program development, research, and planning.

Over the coming years, the Trust Fund will continue to build on its efforts to support community-based efforts to develop, operate, expand, and enhance prevention initiatives; and to support networks of coordinated resources and activities to better strengthen and support families.

Our goals focus on the need to bring more children and families into our programs and on the need to conduct even more research to develop better, more useful programs. We will allocate time toward activities that raise awareness throughout the state of the problems of child abuse and neglect, and we will communicate about our own activities to deal with these problems.

Through our membership in the National Alliance and along with our partners, contractors, and other state agencies, we will dedicate our energy and resources toward becoming part of a movement devoted to furthering the well-being of our families.

It is essential to our work to have systems in place that respond to our developing needs and that support our whole range of activities, now and over the coming years. We will continue to review, adapt, and organize our managerial and financial systems to make sure they are aligned with our work.





# operations

**our connection with the community** The Children's Trust Fund works with more than 200 program staff members, more than 130 certified trainers, and many partner entities throughout the state. The program staff members are paraprofessionals, social workers, clinicians, child development specialists, trainers, and managerial and financial personnel.

The trainers bring our programs to community-based agencies throughout the state, help form the networks among service providers, and hold meetings and forums to educate service providers, state agencies, partners, and the public about our programs and the issues surrounding child abuse and neglect.

**training** The Trust Fund provides significant training to staff, partners, and program participants, in relation to programs themselves and on managing the programs.

**Program Training** The Trust Fund provides broad-based training for staff on prevention strategies and approaches, family support, and parent education. Recent training initiatives have focused on preventing shaken baby syndrome and childhood sexual abuse, on teaching personal safety to children and adolescents, and on working in shelters with the Head Start and Birth-to-Three program.

There is comprehensive training for all levels of staff working within the Nurturing Families Network. The training covers

the program model itself, cultural diversity, and ways to make the program more responsive to fathers. More than 200 service providers have been trained on the requirements of their work, including engagement, assessment, and child development skills; clinical supervision for supervisors; and training focused on the needs of program managers.

Under the Help Me Grow program, health care providers in 153 pediatric and family practices have been trained to recognize early signs of developmental problems and to refer those children and their families for services. Another program trains volunteer coaches in reducing abuse in youth sports.

The Family Development Institute, which was described earlier, provides a statewide training and credentialing program for service providers who work with families.

The research that evaluates our major programs may point to areas in which additional training of staff or service providers could improve the effectiveness of the program. When an area is identified, we decide how to provide the training (for example, in forums or classroom instruction) and what curriculum to use. Ongoing program research tells us how effective the training has been and helps us ensure that we are in turn providing the best service to our families.

**Management Training** The Trust Fund provides technical assistance and training on program management and special topics for frontline staff throughout the year. In 2005, the Trust Fund trained 300 staff working in programs funded by the Trust Fund and 700 staff working within its network.

**staff** The Children's Trust Fund is located at 450 Capitol Avenue in Hartford. It employs 15 staff members, all state employees, who form a leadership team that directs our programs, forms our connections to communities and service providers, conducts fundraising, and engages in advocacy on prevention issues.

The staff members are social workers, applied psychologists, child developmental specialists, and managerial and fiscal personnel. Many have Masters-level educations; all have many years of experience in the field of preventing child abuse and neglect.

**financial information** The Trust Fund receives money from the federal government, the State of Connecticut, private foundations, and other private sources. The Trust Fund has been designated as Connecticut's lead agency for the federal Department of Health and Human Services Community-Based Grants to Prevent Child Abuse and Neglect. The grants support administrative costs, as well as programs that train human services staff in prevention strategies and approaches, build community partnerships, and support new initiatives, such as efforts to prevent shaken baby syndrome. Every dollar contributed or appropriated to the Trust Fund is matched with approximately 2 cents by the federal government.

In turn, the Trust Fund provides funding to public and private non-profit organizations—including schools, hospitals, shelters, police, and community programs—who work to support



families and reduce the incidence of child abuse and neglect. The Trust Fund mails announcements to more than 4,500 individuals and organizations with information on how to receive funding and how to participate in programs.

The Trust Fund has been working to increase its outreach to make sure that it provides funding to a broad range of programs. It has started to fund programs that provide services to teenage girls, grandparents raising grandchildren and families with children at risk for developmental delays. Funding information and sources for the major programs may be found at the back of this report.

**our working principles** As we have gathered experiences in the field of prevention services, we have developed a set of working principles that underlie all of our activities. These working principles present our philosophy, our way of meeting our goals, and our mode of operations.

**Working Principles of the Children's Trust Fund:**

- We have a positive approach to our work and produce quality outcomes—while maintaining our humor.
- We are kind and sensitive to the strengths and challenges of individuals, families, and communities.
- We are cognizant of and guided by what is in the best interest of the organization.
- We value teamwork, share knowledge, foster growth, and support each other.

- We are interdependent and collaborate at local, state, and federal levels.
- We value the breadth of what cultures, individual families, and community agencies bring to our work.
- We value the process of completing a task.
- We conduct ourselves with professional integrity at all times.
- We are responsible for our feelings and behaviors and for communicating with others as clearly as possible.

# acknowledgments

The Children's Trust Fund would like to thank everyone who supports and contributes to our work, including the Governor, state legislators, state agencies, our community-based agencies and service providers, and partners. We are deeply grateful to those who fund our efforts, including the federal and state governments, private foundations, and individual donors. A list of our recent donors may be found at the back of this report.







## **Children's Trust Fund**

**450 Capitol Avenue**

**Hartford, CT 06106**

**860.418.8765**

**[www.ct.gov/ctf](http://www.ct.gov/ctf)**

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